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Into the immensity of otherness

The philosophy of between and the body of the architectural uncertainty

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Synopsis

The human being, attempting to find certainties and escape from the existential abyss, separates the world into antonyms. Over and above the binary logic, the paper approximates how the *philosophy of between* contrives the architecture of *interstitial thought*, and how this architectural approach reshapes the limits of Humanities. This retroactive disciplinary movement appears mediated by the body and corporeal images, as the projective metaphors evoke the reality and become part of it.

A variety of philosophical notions, considered as interdisciplinary thinking tools, is used to approach the architectural uncertainty: *transindividuality* emerges as an operation at a suprasant level for a dynamic association of otherness; the *deleuzian fold* prioritizes relation, than dualities, and promotes *serendipity states*: a sense of epiphany and an impression of unforced creative process where things occur naturally. As life and architecture draw the lines in-between dipoles, in the contemporary *liquid* era of the *fuzzy* limits, the *interstitial* space is of principal concern.

Key words: Dipole, body, otherness, in-between, transindividuality.

The meaning of architecture, from its origin, is impregnated with uncertainties, without being able to elaborate a stable definition of what really architecture is. In contemporary tradition, modern architectural manifests have aspired to install theoretical foundations in an universal consensus and certainty. Till the decade of 50's, the interest has been transitioned from the ideal human to common individual, overcoming Le Corbusier's modulator. The visions of architecture have been transformed even more radically; from notions of supreme demiurge to utopian imaginations and then to super-star artifacts. Architecture in contemporaneity returns to its original state: as facilitator of tools between different structures; as a link between its inhabitants; as a channel in-between diverse visions.

As architecture proposes systems that are not, and can never be completed, generates frames based on constant discovery and not on prior prescription. The architectural thought is not oriented only in the composition of the built environment; architecture constitutes a structure of thinking, a stratified, organized conformation of the reality. Thus, the architectural practice is compounded of ideation or cogitation tools of other disciplines that provide a continuous feedback. This paper explores the elementary notions of the shift between *binary thinking* and the *philosophy of between* and its effects on architecture in a perpetual retroactive nourishment.

The world and all constructed space are explained from a dual architecture, as a result of binary thinking -of framing issues on opposites-. (Elbow, 1993;23-51) Although duality is a phenomenological undeniable paradigm in nature, Lévi Strauss argues that any dualistic classification of the world is more complex than it may appear. Comford suggests that the prototype of all opposition can be sized down to binary sex assignments, while Burnet proposes a world in a cyclic repetition. (Comford, 1956;68)

The question of the body is transcendental in duality; it has been considered that the mind is extensive in itself, without any limits can foresee possible futures, but above all, it can be liberated from the body. Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between the lived experience and abstract theorization. The corporeal image constitutes the foundation of the entire configurative expression, whose mediating faculty evokes the reality, while it is becoming part of the existential identity (Pallasmaa, 2014;46). It is an integral part of the encounter between environment and body, as architectural-projective metaphor and as pattern that permit penetrate the experiences of the other.

A theme emerges and returns with constancy in the duality body-mind; the otherness. The human body due to its plasticity, material and immaterial, is reborn through conscious action, sometimes by archetypal forms or by proto-genetic, exceptional and extraordinary forms. This set of elements contributes to the emergence of novel tools, approaches and languages, which install the subjective, intersubjective and transubjective experimentation (Alcázar, 2016;11). The human corporeity beyond than a simple personalized individual entity, makes sense as collective body, connecting the embodied conditions of the others. When the encounter of the bodies really happens, under conditions of heterogeneity and not

of constitutive otherness, then an action of freedom is produced.

The deleuzian fold, in this sense, is a politics of liberation that guarantees the possibility to think and operate on given heterogeneity, providing new senses: to arouse constituent bodies sustained by the desire of the *transindividuality*. (Markoulatos, 2007;42) The *transindividuality* indicates a double movement; the *co-existence* at a pre-individual level, and the collective actions. It is a *meta-stable* system that aniquilates the psychic and collective individualization, interweaving relationships that are *co-composed* between individuals and society, excluding the substantialization of one or the other. (Mpartsidis, 2014;35)

The human being is a relationship. It is related to a You and it is related to an It. (Buber, 1984;8) In the relation with the environment, the primordial word *I-It appears as an isolated being and acquires self-consciousness as a subject*. In the relationship with the other, the *I-You appears as a person and acquires self-awareness as an objectivity*. (Díaz, 1990;19) The real encounter occurs when there is no mediation; it happens in the "sphere of the between", that goes beyond individualism and collectivism; it is the real place of the interhuman occurrences.

The *Philosophy of Between* focus on entry (Arancibia, 2010;28-30) and not on *entity*. Its history goes from the theories of Heraclitus, to the *Khora* of Plato, to Hegel's *mediation*, Deleuze's *threshold theory*, the *Logic of Being* and of *Between of Desmond*, Foucault's *space of the between and the Intermediate World of Sloterdijk*. What is *between* things allows them to relate and therefore they exist. The significant element is the non-object: *which is too fuzzy-vague-diffuse-
evanescent to allow itself to be immobilized and isolated; that it is neither assignable nor representable* (Jullien, 2008;24-25) The *interstitial thought* rejects the rigid and stable structures and focuses on what is flexible. The essential is the process itself; the moments in which the transformations happen, when things are in maximum potentiality.

A line of architects of XX century, activist and active collectives focus on the Philosophy of Between. Camilo Sitte, Christopher Alexander and Serge Ivan Chermayeff consider important what is situated between the buildings, Alison and Peter Smithson examine the Interval and the *Philosophy of Threshold* and Aldo van Eyck considers architecture as the configuration of the *In-Between*. Robert Venturi describes the space between opposites and contradiction, Bernard Tschumi presents *the unclassifiable or unprogrammed spaces* that arise when the pairs of opposites are in conflict, Eisenman focuses on the *processes of interstitiality* as a new concept of *spatiality* and Colin Rowe on the vacuum as dynamic element.

The *liquid* contemporary condition navigates without a point of reference; living *in-between*, among a multiplicity of places, in the interstices. (Bauman, 2006;169) Being *in-between* privileges the humans with an holistic vision of social structures and of themselves. The "*Between*" is the place where the discovery is hidden, where innovation is located. What has no name is what exists hidden among the categories that define the known.

To approach *interstitial thought*, to design from the *Between*, there is the technique of *wu wei*: the strategy of *not acting*. (Jullien, 2007) It does not refer adopting a passive attitude, but letting things happen naturally. This leads to the fifth kind of ambiguity, to a fortunate confusion, (Empson, 1949;2) to a creation from states of epiphany or serendipity. Evaluating and trusting in *silent transformations* is letting things to be done on their own, to mature naturally.

Life appears as something indeterminate, full of potentialities. The indeterminacy of the in-between is a way of designing architecture, experimenting serendipity, embodying a liquid life, connecting with the Otherness. Architecture draws the lines *in-between* opposites and the way of oscillating between them defines the way of living and creating.

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Biography

Magdalini Grigoriadou. Architect (2007) by the University of Thessaloniki (Greece), with a Master's Degree (2008) in Digital Communication and Multimedia in Architectural Project, and a PhD (2014) by the Polytechnic University of Madrid. Her research focuses on the concept of the imaginary, collective or personal, through the evolution of the notions of space, time and body. Since 2012 she has been part of the research group Hypermedia: Architecture Configuration Workshop, and GILAVE group as an external collaborator of the Complutense University of Madrid. In her professional career, she has participated as an active member between 2011 and 2013 in the collective Todo por la Praxis. In her postdoctoral research, (Sept.2016-Sept.2017) Sparágmata: incoherent fragments of vulnerable bodies in a multidimensional city, in Mexico City, the aim has been to explore the experience of nostos/nostalgia and otherness within the contemporary conception of the fragmented body.

Efi Giannopoulou. Architect D.U.Thrace, Greece (2005), International Mention Doctor in Architecture (thesis titled: BETWEEN: Suddenly, Without End, The Unnamable) of the E.T.S.A.M (2016), forms her researcher lines while follows the concept of Between, as a place and as a process in between disciplines, spaces and states. Has participated in national and international congresses, conferences, publications and pedagogic projects, with papers and strategies related to the use of new technologies in the reanimation of urban life and the architectural creative process. Participant in various collective exhibition with game, video and installations, develops her architectural profession in public and private sector.